

RESOLUTION NO. 2917-2023

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY IN SUPPORT OF REOPENING THE MACK E. MICKELSON ARTHRITIS AND REHABILITATION CENTER THERAPY POOL LOCATED AT THE MILLS HEALTH CENTER IN SAN MATEO CALIFORNIA

WHEREAS, the Mack E. Mickelson Therapy Pool ("Mickelson") is an ADA-accessible warm water therapy pool located in San Mateo, California at Mills Health Center, which is operated by Sutter Health.

WHEREAS, Mickelson was constructed over 25 years ago using charitable contributions from residents of San Mateo County.

WHEREAS, for over 25 years, thousands of residents of San Mateo County who suffered, and many who continue to suffer, from health issues including permanent disabilities, debilitating injuries, autoimmune disorders, surgery, and mobility impairments, as well as pregnant women, used Mickelson to exercise, rehabilitate health issues and mitigate physical decline.

WHEREAS, both intervention and prevention are equally critical components of an equitable and effective healthcare system.

WHEREAS, Mickelson's ability to provide both preventative and interventionist therapies to residents of San Mateo community suffering from health issues makes it an asset to the community at large and even more so to elderly residents and residents with mobility impairments.

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, Sutter Health, its subsidiaries, and its employees receive significant financial benefits for providing healthcare services in San Mateo County from both public and private contracts.

WHEREAS, in January 2020, Sutter Health substantially decreased the hours during which Mickelson was accessible to community members who relied upon its availability to maintain their health.

WHEREAS, in March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sutter Health ceased operating the Mickelson therapy pool.

WHEREAS, in June 2021, Sutter Health publicly announced its intent to permanently close Mickelson.

WHEREAS, as a direct result of Sutter Health's decision to close Mickelson, residents of San Mateo County who previously relied upon Mickelson to treat and prevent significant health issues are now suffering from acute and chronic physical pain and mental anguish which, in turn, decreases the independence of those residents and impacts their ability to live with dignity.

WHEREAS, over 4,800 patients, caregivers, and community members have signed a petition to reopen Mickelson to increase the health, independence, and dignity of those residents who rely upon it.

WHEREAS, there is also an apparent and growing need for the Mickelson therapy pool and the services it provides due to San Mateo County's rapidly increasing number of elderly residents who are highly likely to suffer from the health issues noted above, among others.

WHEREAS, there are no comparable warm water therapy pools that can adequately accommodate the residents of San Mateo County who previously relied upon Mickelson.

WHEREAS, estimates provided by Sutter Health suggest that reopening Mickelson with any required repairs or upgrades would cost approximately \$250,000.00.

WHEREAS, warm water therapy pools in the region can and do operate profitably and safely under relevant COVID-19 regulations.

WHEREAS, Peninsula Health Care District, Sequoia Healthcare District, and the County of San Mateo have expressed willingness to assist with the cost of restoring and operating the Mickelson Pool for the benefit of their residents;

WHEREAS, Sutter Health received \$853 million in federal funding under the CARES Act, one purpose of which was for "retrofitting facilities" [<https://calhospital.org/faqs-federal-funding-general/>] such as the Mickelson Therapy Pool, as well as staffing, but claimed that financial considerations and COVID in general justified the facility closure; and

WHEREAS, it has been affirmed by the San Mateo County Environmental Health Department that "Therapeutic pools were exempt from any closures... [and] have been allowed to provide access during COVID and the present";

NOW, BE IT RESOLVED, that in light of the foregoing, promptly reopening the Mack E. Mickelson Arthritis and Rehabilitation Center therapy pool for community use with the same open access hours that it had prior to January 2020, is the most prudent option to preserve and improve the health of residents in Portola Valley who

now rely upon, or who will rely upon, warm water therapy to maintain their health, independence, and dignity. We urge Sutter Health to take advantage of the offer from the Peninsula Health Care District, Sequoia Healthcare District, and the County of San Mateo to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding funding for repairs and operations so that the pool may be reopened at the earliest possible date.

Passed and adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley, California, at a meeting thereof held on the 11th meeting of January, 2024, by the following vote of the members thereof:

REGULARLY PASSED AND ADOPTED this 11th meeting in January, 2023.



Jeff Aalfs
Mayor

ATTEST:



Melissa Thurman, MMC
Town Clerk